



Booth

Volume 8 | Issue 4

Article 1

4-1-2016

Motherlode

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Recommended Citation

Womer, Brenna (2016) "Motherlode," *Booth*: Vol. 8: Iss. 4, Article 1.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/booth/vol8/iss4/1>

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Motherlode

Abstract

I want to be a mother but only on Sundays, yelling at them not to dirty their best in the woods behind the church. French Roast Folgers, Styrofoam cups, single serving Coffee-mate creamers, and Sweet'N Low packets that cause cancer like microwaves and cellphones, but we use them anyway because God is in control. I layer Oreo crumbs, Jell-O pudding, and Cool Whip in hand-me-down Pyrex for the potluck after second service. Don't doodle in the hymnal; shirttail tucked; eyes closed when we pray; take the grape juice from the inner circle—the wine is for Mommy; don't eat the bread, *the body*, before Pastor blesses it.

Cover Page Footnote

"Motherlode" was originally published at [Booth](#).



April 1, 2016

Motherlode

Nonfiction by Brenna Womer

I want to be a mother but only on Sundays, yelling at them not to dirty their best in the woods behind the church. French Roast Folgers, Styrofoam cups, single serving Coffee-mate creamers, and Sweet’N Low packets that cause cancer like microwaves and cellphones, but we use them anyway because God is in control. I layer Oreo crumbs, Jell-O pudding, and Cool Whip in hand-me-down Pyrex for the potluck after second service. Don’t doodle in the hymnal; shirttail tucked; eyes closed when we pray; take the grape juice from the inner circle—the wine is for Mommy; don’t eat the bread, *the body*, before Pastor blesses it.

I want to be a mother when she has ballet at the little studio downtown; when his number is painted on my cheek for Friday night football; during the hour we spend making brownies and then licking the bowl, and in the thirty seconds it takes them to tear through their Christmas Eve stockings.

I want to be a mother, but only during the in-between times when I’m not fucking it up. When I’m not giving them a reason to hate me, hate the world, hate themselves. Early on, when they’re fresh things, in those quiet night hours as they feed from my body, looking at me or past me—my connection to the realm of spirits, to God the Father, the Mother. My portal to a higher, better place before they learn to be here, to be human.

I want to be a mother before my daughter learns what she is to the world, before she gets angry at me for telling her the way things are, for breaking that beautiful spell as my own mother did. Before she spreads her legs for the first, the could-be, the why-won't-you, the true, the broken, and the anything-to-fill-this-hole kinds of love. We are not princesses.

I want to be a mother before I hate my son for what's between his legs: the soft, pillowy flesh he'll learn to wield like a sword. Let me be a mother before he realizes the power he has. Before boys will be boys and all guys do it and that's just the way men are. When he's brand new and sliding out of me, when he's latched on and drinking, when he bathes with his sister and kisses her on the mouth—before the world teaches them their place.

I want to be a mother, because I'm supposed to want to be a mother. But as I sat waiting for the nurse to come back with pregnancy-test results, a picture of two kids in a cornfield taped to her name badge, it wasn't a choice. It wasn't want. It was a thing that was happening, like an earthquake or daylight saving time. And even if I decided to say *No, no thank you* or *Not now, not yet*—even if I slept through the quake and refused to set my clocks back—still, forever, once, I was a mother. I was the one who would love and ruin them, the one they'd respect and blame. I was the one who'd know their bodies first, their minds, before they knew themselves, and keep their secrets before they understood there were any to keep. With a cocktail of fear and want, no and yes, me and all their potential in my belly, I was—for however brief a time—Mother.

Brenna Womer is a graduate student at Missouri State University where she teaches composition and serves as an assistant editor of *Moon City Review*. Her work is forthcoming in *New Delta Review*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Perversion Magazine*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Grist*, *Dewpoint*, and the *Sierra Nevada Review* and has appeared previously in *Maudlin House*, *The Dr. T. J. Eckleburg Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, and *NEAT*.